

VZCZCXRO4066  
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHML #3478 2300852  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 180852Z AUG 06  
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2567  
INFO RUEHZS/ASEAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA IMMEDIATE 6495  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 2823  
RULSJGA/COMDT COGARD WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUSICWP/COMLOGGRUWESTPAC SINGAPORE IMMEDIATE  
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS MANILA 003478

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/EX AND EAP/MTS  
STATE PASS EPA  
STATE PASS USAID  
USDOC FOR 4430/ITA/MAC/ SBERLINGUETTE  
USDOC PASS TO USPTO FOR PETER FOWLER  
USDOC FOR NOAA/NMMS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EWWT](#) [TPHY](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: LARGEST OIL SPILL IN PHILIPPINE HISTORY-REQUEST FOR  
ASSISTANCE FORTHCOMING

1. This is an action request. See paragraph 6.

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SUMMARY  
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2. The tanker "Solar I" sank in Guimaras Strait in the Philippines August 11 and discharged 200,000 liters of its 2.1 million liters of oil. The spill is moving on-shore and threatening fisheries, marine reserves, coral reefs, mangrove forests, and beaches in three provinces. The Philippine government has announced that it will be requesting assistance from the international community, and specifically the USG, to contain and mop up the spill and neutralize the risk of spillage from the remaining oil tanks. Embassy would like to respond rapidly and favorably to GRP request for assistance and requests response from PACOM and Department/Interagency at their earliest convenience. End Summary.

3. Sunshine Maritime Development Corporation's oil tanker, "Solar I", was transporting 2.1 million liters of oil for Petron when it sank in approximately 400 fathoms of water on August 11 in Guimaras Straits. One of the 10 cargo tanks burst while the vessel was sinking, discharging 200,000 liters of oil into the surrounding marine environment. The nine remaining cargo tanks on the sunken vessel are believed to be intact, but remain a possible threat to release much greater volumes of oil until they are recovered or neutralized.

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CURRENT SITUATION  
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4. Philippine Coast Guard Deputy Commander Alen Torribio told EconOff on August 16 that the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) does not have adequate capacity to contain the present spill, much less the potentially much larger quantities that could escape the vessel. The PCG only has one oil boom of 2,000 feet length to contain the spill. Torribio called this inadequate and said he needed another 16,400 feet of boom. In addition, the PCG has only two skimmers and needs at least three more to mop up the oil. The PCG anticipates that the clean-up will require one year, and calls it the worst oil spill in Philippine history.

¶5. The spill has traveled more than 19.5 nautical miles and affected 200 kilometers of Western Negros Island, Eastern Panay Island, and Guimaras Island coastlines. Torribio said the Coast Guard has been having a difficult time plotting the movement and extent of the spill and requested Global Positioning System (GPS) mapping and tracking support from the USG. The spill occurred at 122 degrees, 26 minutes east longitude and 10 degrees, 14.5 minutes north latitude.

¶6. ACTION REQUEST: The PCG has indicated that it will shortly make a specific request through the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs for USG assistance. We anticipate that the GRP will ask for 16,400 feet of oil containment boom, three additional skimmers, and associated materials (absorbent pads, gloves, masks, boots, etc.), as well as assistance (probably overhead imagery) for mapping and tracking the spill. Additionally, Embassy would like to offer a visit by U.S. Coast Guard assessment team, if USG funding can be identified, discussed in interagency meeting in Washington, D.C. on August 17. Please advise. August 21 is a local holiday, but Embassy point of contact EconOff Caron De Mars is available at any time via Embassy switchboard.

JONES